

playlists for dementia patients



grey matters by Ruth Gerzon

Music is powerful. It strengthens social bonds, bringing people together in shared experiences, from concert halls to pop concerts and pub music, and the waiata that form an integral part of all Maori hui.

Waiata mark special occasions, express love, loss and grief, with contemporary songs composed to mark the concerns of today's generation. Whatever the song, the very act of singing together, whether at hui or in a choir, directly impacts neuro-chemicals such as endorphins in the brain, boosting closeness and connection among listeners.

Music reaches into our souls, tapping deep into our emotional lives. It has been linked to dopamine release, involved in regulating mood and bringing us pleasure. But it can also bring pain. Two decades ago, when we lived with teenagers, they would play their favourite songs over and over again. Those songs still make me shudder when I hear them.



Whether it is jazz, classical, country, opera, blues, hip hop, folk pop or rap, we all have music we love and music we loathe. It is such an individual thing. That's why I rate headphones as a wonderful invention. These miraculous devices mean I rarely have to listen to rap music played by teenagers during their holidays.

In a surprising coincidence, last month I met two people focused on playlists for people with dementia, using personalised music to enhance the lives of older people. Individual playlists not



This was back in 2006, when iPods were first becoming popular. He discovered that none of the 16,000 long-term care facilities in the United States used iPods and volunteered at a rest home to create personalised playlists for residents. These were compiled not only with the music residents enjoyed, but also that which reflect their identity, culture and past history.

The programme was a hit with residents, staff and families. It served to peel back the dementia fog, allowing memories to flood back, reconnecting people with their identity. Families would say, "She looks like the Mum of old".

From this small beginning the non-profit Music & Memory organisation was set up. Now there are branches in Europe and Australia, and New Zealand is in its sights.

The Music & Memory programme shows rest home staff and families how to personalise playlists for the increasingly long list of people who may benefit. This includes people in hospice care and people with mental illness as well as dementia and Parkinson's.

Betsy Stephens has offered to present more information on this programme at a public meeting at Knox Presbyterian Church on Tuesday, April 9, from 10am to 11.30am.

If you are interested in coming, phone or email Eastern Bay Villages on 020 4161 5887 or easternbayvillages@gmail.com. With Betsy for inspiration we might soon see more nodding and foot tapping seniors and kaumatua in our community.

I leave you with this question to ponder and discuss with your family or friends. If you had to make a playlist of your life what would be on it?

Music of your childhood, the backbeat of your teens, music that makes you cry or music that fills you with joy? If your mind and memories begin to fade away what soundtrack would bring them back?

only provide music we like but can also reflect our identity, culture, history and experiences. First up was Betsy Stephens, originally from Colorado who features on pages two and three.

The following day I met a passing traveller from Vancouver, Alexis Tennent, who plans to come back here to study. She recounted the story of her grandmother who seemed not to be following conversations. Yet after she heard songs from her past she started to sing and could give the next line.

Alexis is involved in research on music and memory at the University of British Columbia where four groups are being followed. One group of seniors listens to digital players such as iPods, loaded with music that delights them, one group listens to poems and stories, a third group does more traditional group music therapy and a fourth control group has no intervention.

This study has only just begun so there are no conclusions yet. However, Betsy points me to completed research showing a large decrease in behavioral problems and need for anti-psychotic medications in nearly 100 rest homes using iPods loaded with personalised playlists.

A man called Dan Cohen in New York started this new trend. He thought that if he ever ended up in a rest home, he wanted to be able to listen to his favourite 1960s music.

A fortnightly series for seniors by Ruth Gerzon from Eastern Bay Villages.

WhakaMax movies		Please see www.whakamax.co.nz for movie info, trailers & coming soon!				
APRIL	FRI 5	SAT 6	SUN 7	TUES 9	WED 10	
CAPTAIN MARVEL M 124 MIN	5:55PM	1:20PM 5:55PM	10:00AM 4:50PM	1:20PM 5:55PM	5:55PM	
DAFFODILS M 93 MIN	11:00AM 6:05PM	11:00AM 6:05PM	10:00AM 5:00PM	11:00AM 6:05PM	11:00AM 6:15PM	
DUMBO PG 112 MIN	11:30AM 3:40PM 5:50PM	11:30AM 1:45PM 5:50PM	10:15AM 12:30PM 2:30PM	11:30AM 3:40PM 5:50PM	11:15AM 3:30PM 5:50PM	
FIGHTING WITH MY FAMILY M 108 MIN	1:20PM 7:50PM	1:20PM	12:20PM	1:20PM	1:20PM	
FIVE FEET APART M 116 MIN	11:00AM 3:45PM 8:00PM	11:00AM 3:45PM 8:00PM	10:00AM 2:40PM 7:00PM	11:00AM 3:45PM 8:00PM	11:00AM 3:45PM 8:10PM	
GREEN BOOK (LAST DAYS) M 130 MIN	1:00PM	1:00PM	12:00PM	1:00PM	1:00PM	
HOTEL MUMBAI (LAST DAYS) R16 123 MIN	1:20PM	7:50PM	4:40PM	7:50PM	1:20PM	
LITTLE (LADIES NIGHT PREVIEW SCREENING) TBC 109 MIN					8:00PM	
PET SEMATARY R16 101 MIN	3:50PM 8:20PM	3:50PM 8:20PM	2:45PM 7:15PM	3:50PM 8:20PM	3:50PM 8:20PM	
SHAZAM! M 132 MIN	12:00PM 2:45PM 5:30PM 8:05PM	12:00PM 2:45PM 5:30PM 8:05PM	10:30AM 1:15PM 4:00PM 6:45PM	12:00PM 2:45PM 5:30PM 8:05PM	12:00PM 2:45PM 5:30PM 8:05PM	
US R16 116 MIN	11:00AM 3:30PM 8:10PM	11:00AM 3:30PM 8:10PM	12:30PM 4:45PM 7:00PM	11:00AM 3:30PM 8:10PM	11:00AM 3:30PM 8:10PM	
VAI PG 90 MIN	1:45PM 6:00PM	4:00PM 6:00PM	2:45PM 7:10PM	1:45PM 6:00PM	1:30PM 6:00PM	